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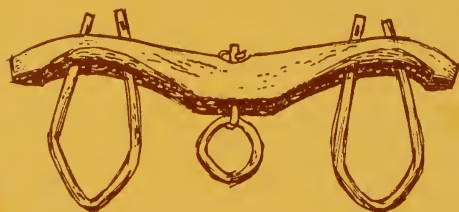
McMurtrie, Douglas C.

A Speech By Abraham Lincoln

LINCOLN ROOM

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# A SPEECH BY Abraham Lincoln

*Contemporary Records of a Campaign Speech  
Delivered at Alton, Illinois, on April 9, 1840*

*By Douglas C. McMurtrie*



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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS • 1939

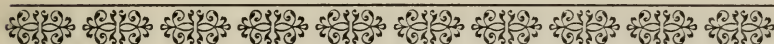
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Lincoln Room



# A SPEECH BY Abraham Lincoln



THE presidential election of 1840 was preceded by one of the most active and colorful campaigns as yet known in the history of national politics. Van Buren's administration, though successful, had made him personally unpopular, and William Henry Harrison was nominated by the Whigs to oppose his re-election. Then was born the never-to-be-forgotten campaign slogan of "Tippecanoe and Tyler too".

Harrison's homely virtues were contrasted with Van Buren's supposed ostentation and autocracies. The "Log Cabin" was the emblem of the Harrison candidacy. The contest developed for the first time some of the features of a modern campaign,

torchlight parades, etc. There were many meetings and the partisan newspapers engaged in the most acrimonious debate. In fact, many new papers sprang up, to live only for the duration of the campaign, for the sole purpose of espousing the merits of one or the other of the contenders for the presidential chair.

Abraham Lincoln was enrolled under the Whig banner as a supporter of Harrison and had been named one of the electoral candidates of the state of Illinois. As such he made a number of campaign speeches throughout the state.

One of the many treasures of the Henry E. Huntington Library at San Marino, California, is a broadside or handbill giving scant advance notice of a political meeting at Alton, on the evening of April 9, 1840, at which "A. Lincoln, Esq'r." would address the people. The existence of this interesting handbill was disclosed during search by the Editor for early issues of the Illinois press preserved in the Huntington Library. Upon request, the authorities courteously extended permission to the Chicago Historical Society for reproduction in this BULLETIN. A reduced facsimile appears on the following page. The text of it has been quoted by Sandburg, vol. I, p. 246.

# **ATTENTION!** **THE** **PEOPLE!!**

---

**A. LINCOLN, ESQ'R.,**  
**OF Sangamon County, one of the *Electoral Candidates*, will ADDRESS the PEOPLE**

**This Evening!!**

**At Early Candlelighting, at the ~~W~~*OLD COURT ROOM*, ~~at~~ (Riley's Building.)**

***By request of***

**MANY CITIZENS.**

**Thursday, April 9th, 1840.**

From our point of view, any public utterance of Abraham Lincoln, even at this early stage of his political career, appears significant. We should naturally expect to find in the well-edited and fervidly enthusiastic Whig organ in Alton, the *Alton Telegraph*, a full and informative account of the speech.

The Chicago Historical Society has an excellent file for this period of the *Alton Telegraph*, in whose office this handbill was undoubtedly printed. On turning to the issue next following the date of the Lincoln meeting, that of April 11, 1840, we find the speech reported in the following single paragraph:

A. Lincoln, Esq. of Sangamon County, one of the Presidential Electors, addressed the citizens of Alton, on last Thursday evening at the old Court Room, on the great questions at issue between the people and the office-holders. Although not more than two or three hours previous notice could be given of the intended meeting, the room, which is very spacious, was crowded to excess; and his speech which, although highly argumentative and logical, was enlivened by numerous anecdotes, was received with unbounded applause, and left a very favorable impression on the minds of his auditors.

Three days before the Alton meeting there had been held at

Carlinville a Whig meeting at which Lincoln also spoke. We find this notice in the *Alton Telegraph* of April 11, 1840, as follows:

A meeting of the people of Macoupin county, friendly to the Harrisburg nominations, took place at Carlinville on Monday the 6th inst. The report of the proceedings has not yet reached us; but we have been informed by gentlemen present that it was the most numerous and enthusiastic ever held in that county. Macoupin has heretofore given the Administration party large majorities. So numerous, however, are the changes which are daily taking place among her intelligent yeomanry, that strong hopes are entertained of the success of the Harrison Ticket at the approaching election. The meeting was addressed with great power and eloquence by A. Lincoln, Esq. of Sangamon, one of the Presidential Electors, and also by other gentlemen.









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